Section I (Amendments to the Claims)

Please amend claims 1-24 and 26, cancel claim 25, and add new claim 27 as set out in the following listing of claims 1-27 of the application:

1. **(Currently amended)** An analytical slide storage and dispensing package comprising:

a [[A]] storage and dispensing container for analytical slides, comprising a cover and a receptacle portion, wherein the receptacle portion comprises a floor and a circumscribing wall forming with the floor a receptacle cavity for holding an array of slides therein, the circumscribing wall including opposing wall portions having cut-outs therein exposing portions of faces of slides in the array of slides reposed in the receptacle cavity, wherein the receptacle portion is sized and constructed so that a user can grasp the array of slides with opposing digits contacting said portions of faces of slides in the array through the cut-outs; and

an array of analytical slides disposed within the receptacle cavity with portions of the outermost slide faces exposed to the cut-outs.

2. **(Currently amended)** The analytical slide storage and dispensing package ~~container~~ of claim 1, wherein the cut-outs each have a same shape.

3. **(Currently amended)** The analytical slide storage and dispensing package ~~container~~ of claim 2, wherein the cut-outs each have a shape selected from the group consisting of semicircular, elliptical, obloid, square, rectangular, semihexagonal, semioctagonal, and other polygonal shapes.

4. **(Currently amended)** The analytical slide storage and dispensing package ~~container~~ of claim 3, wherein the cut-outs each comprise a semicircular shape.

5. **(Currently amended)** The analytical slide storage and dispensing package ~~container~~ of claim 4, wherein the shape of the cut-outs includes vertical linear surfaces tangently intersecting the semicircular shape.

6. **(Currently amended)** The analytical slide storage and dispensing package ~~container~~ of claim 1, wherein the cut-outs each have a different shape.

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7. **(Currently amended)** The analytical slide storage and dispensing package ~~container~~ of claim 1, wherein the cut-outs each have a same size.

8. **(Currently amended)** The analytical slide storage and dispensing package ~~container~~ of claim 1, wherein the cut-outs each have a different size.

9. **(Currently amended)** The analytical slide storage and dispensing package ~~container~~ of claim 1, wherein the shape of the receptacle cavity is rectangular, and the circumscribing wall includes a front wall, back wall and side walls, wherein the cut-outs are in the front and back wall.

10. **(Currently amended)** The analytical slide storage and dispensing package ~~container~~ of claim 9, wherein the cut-outs in the front wall and back wall are generally substantially aligned with one another.

11. **(Currently amended)** An analytical slide storage and dispensing package comprising:

a [[A]] storage and dispensing container for analytical slides, comprising a cover and a receptacle portion, wherein the receptacle portion comprises a floor and a circumscribing wall forming with the floor a receptacle cavity for holding an array of slides therein, the circumscribing wall including opposing wall portions having cut-outs therein exposing portions of faces of slides in the array of slides reposed in the receptacle cavity, wherein the receptacle portion is sized and constructed so that a user can grasp the array of slides with opposing digits contacting said portions of faces of slides in the array through the cut-outs, wherein the cut-outs are of a size, shape and location so that said user can grasp the array of slides with opposing digits contacting said portions of faces of slides in the array through the cut-outs; and

an array of analytical slides disposed within the receptacle cavity with portions of the outermost slide faces exposed to the cut-outs.

12. **(Currently amended)** The analytical slide storage and dispensing package ~~container~~ of claim 9, wherein the cut-outs in the front wall and back wall are in register with one another.

13. **(Currently amended)** The analytical slide storage and dispensing package ~~container~~ of claim 12, wherein the receptacle cavity has a length in a range of from about 3.5 to about

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5 inches, a width in a range of from about 2 to about 4 inches and a height in a range of from about 1.2 to about 2 inches.

14. **(Currently amended)** The analytical slide storage and dispensing package ~~container~~ of claim 11, wherein the receptacle cavity of the container has a slide capacity in a range of from about 40 to about 100 slides, the receptacle cavity has a length in a range of from about 3.5 to about 5 inches, a width in a range of from about 2 to about 4 inches, and a height in a range of from about 1.2 to about 2 inches, and the receptacle cavity contains a stack of slides within said slide capacity.

15. **(Currently amended)** The analytical slide storage and dispensing package ~~container~~ of claim 11, wherein the receptacle cavity of the container has a slide capacity in a range of from about 60 to about 90 slides, the receptacle cavity has a length in a range of from about 3.5 to about 5 inches, a width in a range of from about 2 to about 4 inches, and a height in a range of from about 1.2 to about 2 inches, and the receptacle cavity contains a stack of slides within said slide capacity.

16. **(Currently amended)** The analytical slide storage and dispensing package ~~container~~ of claim 1, wherein the cover and the receptacle portion of the container comprise a material selected from the group consisting of plastics, wood, ceramics, cellulosic materials, metals, composite materials, woven web materials, and non-woven web materials.

17. **(Currently amended)** The analytical slide storage and dispensing package ~~container~~ of claim 1, wherein the cover and the receptacle portion of the container are formed of plastics.

18. **(Currently amended)** The analytical slide storage and dispensing package ~~container~~ of claim 17, wherein the cover and the receptacle portion of the container comprise a material selected from the group consisting of natural and synthetic polymers and resins.

19. **(Currently amended)** The analytical slide storage and dispensing package ~~container~~ of claim 18, wherein the cover and receptacle portion are formed of a material selected from the group consisting of polyethylene, polypropylene, polyethylene terephthalate, polyvinylchloride, polyvinylidenechloride, polycarbonate, polyurethane, polyamide, polytetrafluoroethylene and polyvinylacetate.

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20. **(Currently amended)** The analytical slide storage and dispensing package ~~container~~ of claim 1, wherein the cover and receptacle portion are formed of a material selected from the group consisting of cellulosic materials and polymers.

21. **(Currently amended)** The analytical slide storage and dispensing package ~~container~~ of claim 1, wherein the cover and receptacle portion are formed of polyvinylchloride.

22. **(Currently amended)** The analytical slide storage and dispensing package ~~container~~ of claim 18, wherein the cover and receptacle portion are fabricated by a technique selected from the group consisting of die-molding, extrusion molding, vacuum forming, solvent casting, injection molding, and roto-molding.

23. **(Currently amended)** The analytical slide storage and dispensing package ~~container~~ of claim 21, wherein the cover and receptacle portion are fabricated by a process comprising application of heat and/or pressure.

24. **(Currently amended)** The analytical slide storage and dispensing package ~~container~~ of claim 1, as fabricated by a process including any of pressure forming and thermoforming.

25. **(Cancelled)**

26. **(Currently amended)** The analytical slide storage and dispensing package ~~container~~ of claim 13, wherein the cut-outs each have a length at the top of the front or back wall that is in a range of from about 0.5 inch to about 1.5 inches.

27. **(New)** A method comprising the step of grasping with one hand the array of analytical slides from the analytical slide storage and dispensing package of claim 1, and transferring the array of analytical slides to an automated slide processing apparatus.

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